

Minutes of a Regular Meeting Town of Los Altos Hills PLANNING COMMISSION

Approved 11/01/2007

THURSDAY, October 4, 2007, 7:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, 26379 Fremont Road

1. ROLL CALL AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at Town Hall.

Present: Chairman Carey, Commissioners Clow, Collins, Cottrell and Harpootlian

Staff: Debbie Pedro, Planning Director; Brian Froelich, Associate Planner; Victoria Ortland, Planning Secretary

2. PRESENTATIONS FROM THE FLOOR - none

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- 3.1 LANDS OF RAMBERG, 27355 Sherlock Road; File #74-07-ZP-SD-GD-VAR; A request for a Site Development Permit for a 1,036 square foot addition. The applicant requests consideration of a height variance to exceed the allowable 27' building height limit (proposed height 31.5 feet) and a setback variance to encroach within the required 40 foot front setback (proposed encroachment of 26 feet into the front setback). CEQA Review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301 (e). (Staff-Brian Froelich)

Ex Parte Contacts Policy Disclosure: Chairman Carey and Commissioner Cottrell had met the applicant at the site; Commissioner Harpootlian had met with Anna Brunzel regarding the application.

Brian Froelich, Associate Planner, presented the staff report stating that the application for the major remodel and addition was before the Planning Commission for the proposed height and setback variances. The property was 1.14 acres in size with a 33.4% slope. The existing residence was built in two phases, first constructed as a cottage in 1925 and an addition added in 1982 with an approved setback encroachment variance from the Planning Commission. The structure was in conformance with height requirements for the time. The proposed addition of 1,036 square feet would reach a height of 31.5' with a two car garage on the lower floor. The Open Space Committee had recommended an open space easement over the portion of the property that is over 30% average slope to connect with an existing open space easement that exists on an adjoining property. Staff recommends approval of the setback variance and denial of the height variance.

Commissioner Harpootlian asked about septic leach fields in open space easements.

Brian Froelich replied that septic systems installations are allowed in open space easements.

Commissioner Cottrell asked the reason why only a portion of the property that exceeded 30% slope was requested for an open space easement.

Debbie Pedro, Planning Director, explained that after a meeting with the property owner, an area near the barn that was under 30% slope was excluded from the easement.

Commissioner Harpootlian felt that some of the requested open space easement area was under 30% slope.

Chairman Carey wanted to rely on the surveyor's measurements per the submitted topographic map.

Eric Ramberg, Applicant, stated that the survey did not show the path that leads to the barn to be under 30% in slope. He explained the highlights of the project on the challenging site as an addition of a garage, location of all bedrooms on the same floor and roof configuration to accommodate a future solar system. At Chairman Carey's request, Mr. Ramberg discussed other alternative plan designs that were considered and the decision to pursue this application.

OPENED PUBLIC HEARING

Bob Story, Sherlock Road, had no objections to the project and said that existing trees block most of the project from his view.

Ginger Summit, Pathways Committee, stated that Sherlock Road is a private road with public access allowed by all but one property. The size of the Ramberg's project does not trigger the pathways easement requirement.

CLOSED PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Cottrell supported the project and commented that the site was difficult. The project required no grading, the height of the addition was lower than the existing building and the parking area will increase to 4 spaces. He wanted the areas requested by the open space easement proven by a civil engineer to be at 30% slope.

Commissioner Collins supported the project as proposed but felt there was not a significant hardship. She supported the open space easement recommendation as requested especially since it connects to an existing open space easement. She agreed with Commissioner Cottrell that the slope should be verified at 30%. The road through the easement should accommodate wildlife passage.

Commissioner Harpootlian did not support the application. He did not support the open space easement as presented. He favored the alternative building site because the location of the house was too close to the road.

Commissioner Clow did not support the application. The Town's ordinances guide applicants through the design process and variances were reserved for exceptional cases. Staff recommendation should be followed and the project continued. The open space easement should include road access through the property.

Chairman Carey supported the application with the variances. He viewed the project as exceptional considering the slope, constrained building area and the existing structures. The open space easement should be requested for areas that have 30% slope and include vehicular access to the barn area.

Eric Ramberg, Applicant, said that he felt the design of the addition was the best for the site. Building at the alternative site would demand significant grading and make the house look larger.

MOTION SECONDED AND PASSED: Motion by Commissioner Cottrell and seconded by Commissioner Collins to approve the Site Development Permit for the addition, variance to the front setback and variance to the height limit. The open space easement is granted with the provision that vehicle access be allowed to the lower portion of the property. Staff will prepare findings for approval.

AYES: Chairman Carey, Commissioners Collins and Cottrell

NOES: Commissioners Clow and Harpootlian

The approval is subject to a 22 day appeal period.

4. OLD BUSINESS

4.1 PHWD WATER METER UPDATE

Debbie Pedro, Planning Director, explained that at the last meeting of the Purissima Hills Water District Board, the Planning Commission's recommendation for consideration of allowing installation of second water meters was discussed. PHWD responded with a letter detailing the reasons why they did not embrace the idea.

Earnest Solomon, Elena Road and PHWD Board of Directors Vice President, explained that the Board did not believe that the installation of second water meters would enhance water conservation. The PHWD Board appreciated the Planning Commission's input and felt that education on landscape water usage was the best tool for water reduction.

Discussion ensued regarding water rate structure, water meters and water conservation.

Chairman Carey wished to continue communication with the Purissima Hills Water District Board to promote water conservation.

Mr. Solomon encouraged the Commission and public to attend future PHWD Board meetings.

Chairman Carey invited Commissioner Harpootlian to report on the Water Conservation Ad Hoc meeting at the next Planning Commission meeting.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 ESTATE HOMES ORDINANCE

Brian Froelich, Associate Planner, explained that this item would need to return to the Planning Commission for a Public Hearing before forwarding to City Council. Suggested setback increases for estate homes (10,000 square feet or more) would increase 4 feet per 2,000 square feet of floor area in the front and 3 feet of setback per 2,000 square feet floor area on the sides. This formula would affect a lot proportionally and keep the buildable area at 53 to 54% total lot size.

Commissioners Collins and Cottrell did not see the effectiveness of the setback ordinance.

Commissioner Clow felt the setbacks were consistent with good building practices.

This item will be scheduled for a future Planning Commission Public Hearing.

5.2 REVIEW OF HEIGHT ORDINANCE

Brian Froelich, Associate Planner, suggested that the Planning Commission establish an Ad Hoc Committee to review the height definition and suggest changes to establish consistency in the height ordinance.

Commissioners Clow and Harpootlian will serve on the Ad Hoc Committee.

6. REPORT FROM THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING

- 6.1 Planning Commission Representative for September 13th-Commissioner Harpootlian reported City Council's decision on the Lands Of Mad Manor subdivision and the West Loyola annexation.
- 6.2 Planning Commission Representative for September 27th-Cancelled
- 6.3 Planning Commission Representative for October 11th- Commissioner Clow
- 6.4 Planning Commission Representative for October 25th-Commissioner Cottrell

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 7.1 Approval of September 6, 2007 minutes as amended.

MOTION SECONDED, AMENDED AND PASSED: Motion by Commissioner Clow and seconded by Commissioner Harpootlian to approve the September 6, 2007 minutes with the following changes: to the motion on page 4, paragraph 10, line 4, include the words "and a lot coverage cap of 34%" and on page 7, change the adjournment time from 8:54 to 8:31.

8. REPORT FROM FAST TRACK MEETING – AUGUST 7, AUGUST 21 AND AUGUST 28, 2007

8.1 LANDS OF KREAGER, 14560 Miranda Road, File #137-07-ZP-SD; A request for a Site Development Permit for a 1,158 (586 sq. ft. first floor / 572 sq. ft. second floor) square foot addition (maximum height 22'9") and interior remodel. CEQA Review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303 (a) (Staff-Nicole Horvitz). Approved with conditions.

8.2 LANDS OF RYAN, 14350 Manuella Road, File #129-07-ZP-SD-GD; A request for a Site Development Permit for a new 6,813 square foot two story residence (maximum height: 27'), a detached 795 square foot secondary dwelling unit and swimming pool. CEQA Review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303 (a) & (e) (Staff-Brian Froelich). Approved with conditions.

9. REPORT FROM SITE DEVELOPMENT MEETING – AUGUST 7, AUGUST 14, AUGUST 21 AND SEPTEMBER 4, 2007

9.1 LANDS OF JARVIS, 23923 Jabil Lane, File #176-07-ZP-SD; A request for a Site Development Permit for a landscape screening plan for a 6,714 square foot new residence approved on June 21, 2005. CEQA Review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15304 (b) (Staff-Brian Froelich). Approved with conditions.

9.2 LANDS OF KLEMM, 12033 Green Hills Court, File #146-07-ZP-SD; A request for a Site Development Permit for a 743 square foot addition and interior remodel. CEQA Review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301 (e) (Staff-Nicole Horvitz). Approved with conditions.

9.3 LANDS OF VERMA, 25911 Elena Road, File #156-07-ZP-SD-GD; A request for a Site Development Permit for a 567 square foot swimming pool. CEQA Review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303(e) (Staff-Nicole Horvitz). Approved with conditions.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Ortland
Planning Secretary